

Message Text

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11

ACTION EA-10

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R 260135Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASDHC 0882

INFO AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 2428

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINR, RP

SUBJECT: MARCOS APPOINTS AMBASSADOR TO TEHRAN

1. MARCOS ANNOUNCED FEB. 22 APPOINTMENT OF LT. GEN. RAFAEL M. ILETO TO UNNAMED AMBASSADORIAL POST. DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS INFORMED EMBASSY FEB. 24 ILETO DESTINED FOR IRAN. MUCH RESPECTED LT. GEN. ILETO HAS BEEN VICE CHIEF OF STAFF ARMED FORCES OF PHILIPPINES (AFP) SINCE JANUARY 1972. IT EXPECTED AMBASSADOR DESIGNATE WILL LEAVE FOR TEHRAN WITHIN NEXT TWO MONTHS.

2. GEN. ILETO HAS ALLEGEDLY REFUSED AT LEAST THREE OTHER ATTEMPTS BY MARCOS TO GIVE HIM DIPLOMATIC POSTS. IN FACT, MISSION WAS INFORMED ILETO REFUSED TEHRAN AS LATE AS DECEMBER 1974, STATING HE WOULD PREFER TO RETIRE FROM GOVERNMENT SERVICE COMPLETELY.

3. ILETO'S POPULARITY, INTEGRITY AND PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE HAVE MADE HIM EXTREMELY VALUABLE TO AFP WHILE HIS LESS THAN TOTAL COMMITMENT TO NEW SOCIETY HAS MADE HIM SOMETHING OF PROBLEM FOR MARCOS. HE, LIKE GEN. MANUEL T. YAN, ANOTHER FORMER AFP VICE CHIEF OF STAFF, PRESENTLY ASSIGNED AS AMBASSADOR TO THAILAND, WERE POSSIBLE RALLYING POINTS FOR MIDDLE-GRADE AND JUNIOR OFFICERS WHO FAVORED CONSTITUTIONAL, REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT AND WHO ARE OPPOSED TO GROWING CORRUPTION AMONG THE GENERALS. MARCOS
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UNDOUBTEDLY PREFERS TO HAVE ILETO, LIKE YAN, OUTSIDE THE

COUNTRY.

4. AMBASSADOR INFORMED BY EXECUTIVE SECRETARY ALEJANDRO MELCHOR THAT MARCOS PLANS TO FOLLOW INDONESIAN MODEL AND KEEP HIS WARROR/DIPLOMATS ON ACTIVE DUTY. WHETHER THIS MEANS ILETO WOULD RETAIN HIS POSITION AS VICE CHIEF OF STAFF AS WELL AS HIS MILITARY RANK REMAINS TO BE SEEN. IT MOST LIKELY HE WILL NOT.

5. COMMENT: ILETO'S EXIT FROM MANILA STAGE MAY MARK FIRST DEPARTURE IF NOT RETIREMENT OF AN "OVERSTAYING GENERAL", THOSE OFFICERS WHOM MARCOS KEPT ON ACTIVE DUTY BEYOND THEIR NORMAL MANDATORY RETIREMENT AGE EITHER BECAUSE HE NEEDED THEIR ABSOLUTE LOYALTY OR THEIR IMAGE, TO BUILD HIS NEW SOCIETY. THEIR RETENTION HAS BEEN CAUSE OF CONSIDERABLE GRUMBLING AMONG YOUNGER OFFICERS WHO WANT TO MOVE UP AND WHO WANT TO SEE FRESH FACES IN SENIOR COMMAND POSITIONS. IF MARCOS INDEED CONTINUES ILETO ON ACTIVE DUTY AND DOES NOT MAKE MAJOR AFP CHANGES, IT WILL BE AN INDICATION OF HIS RELUCTANCE TO FACE UP TO THE DIFFICULT CHOICE BETWEEN REFORM AND STATUS QUO.

6. BIOGRAPHIC MATERIAL BEING POUCHED SEPARATELY TO TEHRAN.
SULLIVAN

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